



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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MEDIA ADVISORY

For immediate release:
September 26, 2007

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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Numerous story angles and interviews available

Richmond, Va. – October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Virginia Department of Social Services' (VDSS) Office of Family Violence can help your media outlet raise public awareness with a wide variety of story angles and interview opportunities.

Interesting topics include:

- **Major cause of Virginia homicides:** One in three murders in Virginia is related to domestic violence, also called intimate partner violence or intimate partner abuse.
Source: Virginia Department of Health, 2007 report
- **Numbers don't tell all:** Statistics may underestimate the magnitude of the problem, as most incidents of abuse are not reported to police. Nationally, it is estimated that only about 20 percent of intimate partner rapes, 25 percent of assaults and 50 percent of stalkings targeting women are reported.
Source: Centers for Disease Control
- **Virginia resources:** From shelters to support groups, help is available for Virginians seeking to get out of a violent situation and live a peaceful life; interviews with domestic violence professionals are available to explain warning signs, free resources for victims, how to create a safety plan, how to leave an abusive situation and much more.
Source: VDSS Office of Family Violence
- **A leading cause of homelessness:** Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness, according to a recent survey of 23 major U.S. cities, including **Norfolk**.
Source: U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2006 Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness
- **Thousands of Virginians seek help:** On average, more than 1,100 people are assisted daily through domestic violence prevention programs in Virginia.
Source: National Census of Domestic Violence Service, November 2006 survey
- **Spousal abuse and the military:** The Department of Defense (DoD) has taken major steps in recent years to crack down on domestic violence in the military. DoD organized a task force that visited three domestic U.S. military bases as part of its domestic violence study. Two of the bases

are in **Virginia – Langley Air Force Base in Hampton and Naval Station Norfolk**, the world's largest Navy base.

Source: Department of Defense

- **Men are abused, too:** Approximately 22 percent of American men have experienced domestic violence.
Source: Centers for Disease Control
- **Economic impact:** Annual health-related costs, lost-productivity costs to companies and lost earnings due to domestic violence are estimated at \$8.3 billion nationwide.
Source: Centers for Disease Control
- **Abuse by in-laws:** Women living in South Asian communities (from the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka) in the U.S. often not only suffer abuse at the hands of their spouses, but their in-laws, as well.
Source: Boston University and Harvard University, 2006 joint study

VDSS' Office of Family Violence funds 46 local domestic violence assistance and prevention programs and one statewide program. For more story ideas or to set up interviews, contact Carla Harris at (804) 726-7107 or carla.harris@dss.virginia.gov.

The Virginia Department of Social Services administers social services programs, consistent with federal and state law and policy of the State Board of Social Services, through 120 local departments of social services throughout the state and its home office in Richmond. The VDSS mission is "People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities."

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